



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING
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TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT
Planning Board Hearing of June 7, 2012

Case Number: PB390

Petitioner: 10010 Gorman Road, LLC

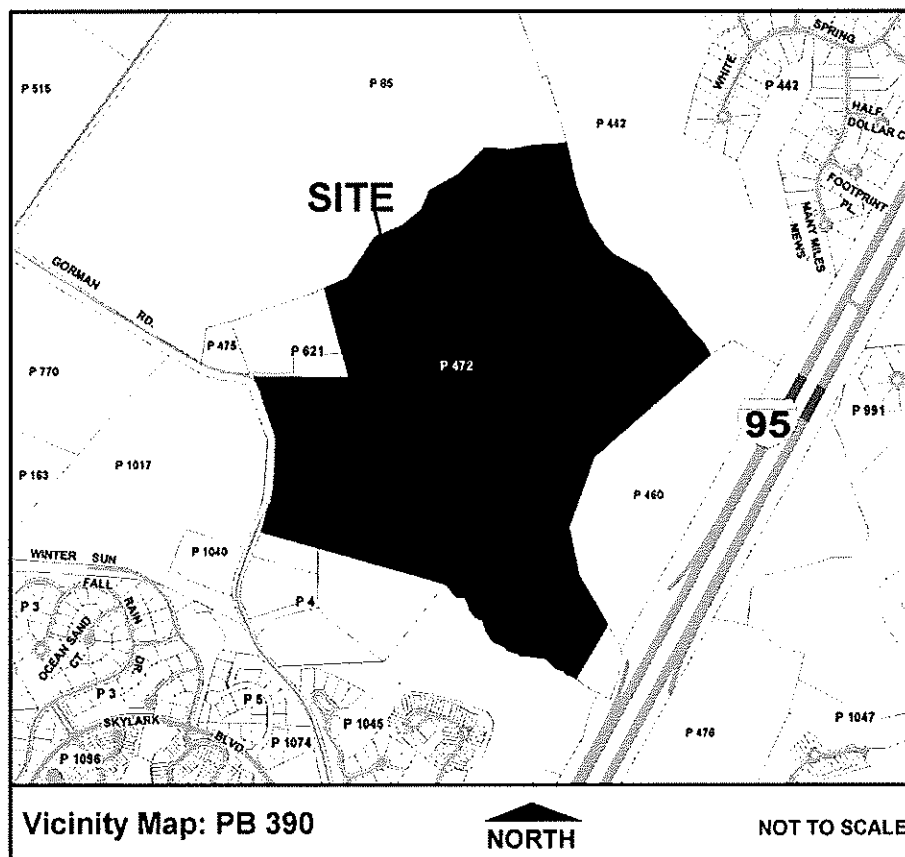
Project Name: Wincopia Farms

File Number: SP-10-005

Request: For Planning Board approval of a preliminary equivalent sketch plan for development located in the R-ED Zoning District, in accordance with Subsection 107.E.1. of the Howard County Zoning Regulations. The proposed subdivision, known as "Wincopia Farms", consists of 171 single-family detached lots, 49 single-family attached lots, and 36 open space lots on 127.59 acres of land.

Recommendation: Approval, based on the plan meeting or exceeding the Planning Board evaluation criteria.

Location: The proposed development is located on the east side of Gorman Road, approximately 2,500 feet north of Skylark Boulevard, opposite Gorman Crossing Elementary and Murray Hill Middle Schools, in the Sixth Election District of Howard County in Laurel, Maryland.



Vicinal Properties: The property is identified on Tax Map 47 as Parcel 472, located on the northbound side of Gorman Road. To the northwest and north are the Clemente Property subdivision and Gould parcel, to the northeast across the Middle Patuxent River is Columbia, Village of King's Contrivance Open Space Lot 153, to the southeast is the State Highway Administration rest stop property adjacent to Interstate 95, and to the south are Emerson Open Space Lot 36 and the Waskey Property subdivision (under review as "Walden Woods" formerly known as "Westover Glen"). Gorman Crossing Elementary and Murray Hill Middle Schools are located west of and across Gorman Road from the property. All properties described are located in the R-ED Zoning District except the Columbia open space (NT Zoning) and the Waskey Property (PSC Zoning).

Legal Notices: The subject property was properly posted with one official Planning Board notice on the development's Gorman Road frontage. Certifications that legal advertisements appeared in the Baltimore Sun and in the Howard County Times were placed in the file for the record.

Regulatory Compliance: This project is subject to compliance with the amended Fifth Edition of the Howard County Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, the Howard County Zoning Regulations (effective 7/28/06), the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) and the Howard County Forest Conservation and Landscape Manuals.

Project History:

- 03/18/2009: Petitioner conducts site visit with DPZ, SCD, MDE and USACE to obtain jurisdictional determination of waters and wetlands.
- 05/03/2010: Petitioner submits SP-10-005, Wincopia Farms to DPZ.
- 11/03/2010: Petitioner submits WP-11-076, requesting a waiver of Subsection 16.1205(a)(10) protecting specimen trees.
- 11/17/2010: DPZ approves WP-11-076, conditionally waiving Subsection 16.1205(a)(10).
- 10/20/2011: DPZ determines that SP-10-005, Wincopia Farms is "approvable".

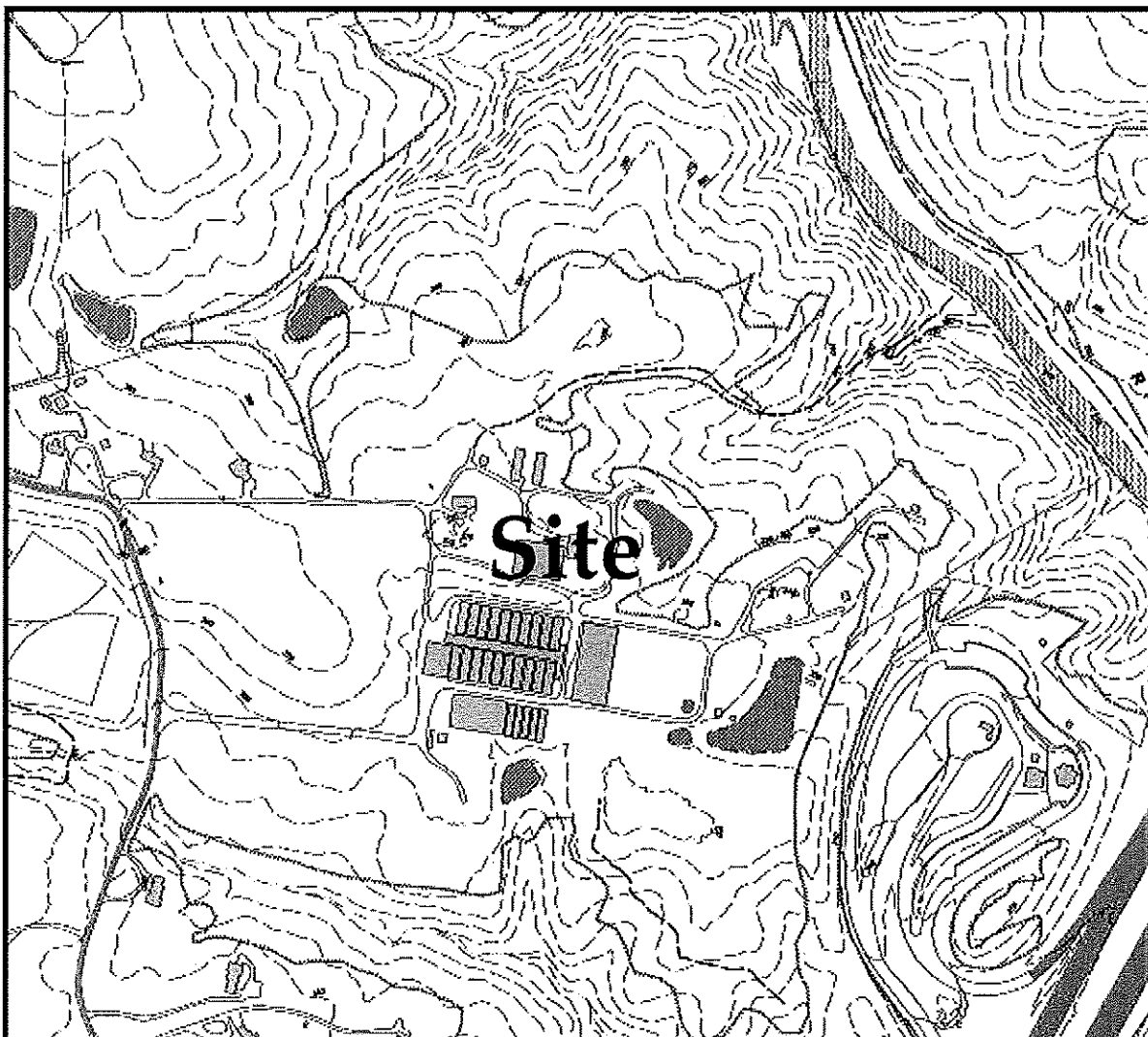
Site and Density Information Chart:

Total Gross Area	127.59 acres
Area of 100-Year Floodplain	6.11 acres
Area of Steep Slopes (Outside of Floodplain)	11.40 acres
Total Net Area (Sub Floodplain and Steep Slopes)	110.08 acres
Units Permitted at R-ED Density (2 d.u. per net acre)	220 dwelling units
Units Proposed	220 dwelling units
Area of Proposed Residential Lots	43.23 acres
Area of Proposed Public Roadway	14.39 acres
Area of Proposed Site Disturbance	75.00 acres
Area of Open Space Required	63.80 acres
Area of Open Space Proposed	67.79 acres
Area of Recreation Open Space Required	1.63 acres
Area of Recreation Open Space Proposed	6.75 acres

General Comments

Overall Site Conditions and Pending Proposal: The property is 127.59 acres in size. The property can be characterized as a relatively flat to gently rolling knoll at the edge of the Middle Patuxent River valley; the steep edges of the knoll are surrounded and incised by small tributaries of the Middle Patuxent River. The area of the property adjacent to the Middle Patuxent River and located in the 100-year floodplain is 6.11 acres and the area of steep slopes (outside of the 100-year floodplain) is 11.40 acres. The site contains wetlands and streams (tributaries of the adjacent Middle Patuxent River) and the site is partially wooded.

The center of the knoll is occupied by an existing house, greenhouses and other structures related to previous nursery operations which recently ceased; the property is now fallow. The property is also occupied by a number of ponds used for irrigation of the now defunct nursery and by two cellular telephone antenna towers. The property's frontage on Gorman Road is occupied by a broad meadow which rises toward the central area of the knoll.



Existing Topography – Wincopia Farms Site, PB390

The proposed subdivision consists of 220 buildable residential lots and 36 open space lots. The residential lots have been designed for 171 single-family detached and 49 single-family attached units. All existing structures would be removed. Two means of access are proposed from Gorman Road, and public roads would be constructed internal to the development. Thirteen lots would gain access to public roads by means of use-in-common driveways. The area of open space lots proposed meets the R-ED open space requirements, and sufficient recreational open space would be provided. The plan includes the dedication of public right-of-way for Gorman Road improvement.

Environmental Resources: The site contains significant stream, wetland, floodplain and steep slope areas. In complying with the intent and purpose of the R-ED Zoning District, the proposal concentrates development in the flat upland area while preserving environmental resources in large open space lots on the periphery of the development and in the Middle Patuxent River valley. Minor impacts to environmental resources are proposed for Gorman Road section improvements, sidewalk and pedestrian bridge construction, sanitary sewer installation, and stormwater management outfall construction. Since the activities resulting in impacts are related mainly to public health and safety and address regulatory requirements, the Department of Planning and Zoning determined the proposed impacts to be essential for reasonable development of the property.

Historic Resources and Cemeteries: The property is not included on the Historic Sites Map as a historic site and there are no known cemeteries on site.

Scenic Roads: Gorman Road is listed on the scenic roads inventory; the project must therefore meet the requirements of Section 16.125, Protection of Scenic Roads. Gorman Road along the project frontage is a narrow two-lane minor collector road with severe horizontal and vertical alignment deficiencies. The scenic character of Gorman Road is fairly consistent from Skylark Boulevard to Leishear Road (which includes the Wincopia Farms frontage); however recent developments such as Hunters Creek Farm, Emerson, and the Board of Education property may have compromised the scenic character of the road. The developer has submitted a plan which provides a visual buffer between Gorman Road and the proposed residential units using a combination of grading and landscaping. No new structure will be closer than 90 feet from the Gorman Road rights-of-way. Gorman Road will be improved by widening and curvature realignment to ensure the safety of vehicular traffic. Pedestrian traffic will be segregated from Gorman Road by a tunnel beneath the road connecting the Wincopia Farms development to the Board of Education property and by a sidewalk system connecting Wincopia Farms to the proposed Walden Woods development to the south.

Water and Sewer: This project will be served by public water and sewer service.

APFO Roads Test: A Traffic Study was prepared by Street Traffic Studies in a report dated April 2009 and was approved by the Development Engineering Division in June 2010.

Schools Test: Given plan approval, the tests for availability of housing unit allocations and school capacity will be administered upon issuance of the Decision and Order by the Planning Board.

Stormwater Management: Stormwater management is proposed in accordance with 2007 State of Maryland Stormwater Management Regulation requiring environmental site design (ESD) to the maximum extent practicable (MEP). The plan employs micro-bioretenention facilities, pervious pavement and dry wells. Two of the existing irrigation ponds will be retrofitted to function as stormwater management facilities.

Forest Conservation: Existing forest covers 71.68 acres of the 127.59-acre site. Approximately half of the forest is located within environmental buffers or steep slopes, and a majority of these areas will remain undisturbed with the exception of clearing for sanitary sewer installation. The remaining forest outside the environmental buffers will also be preserved to create a buffer between the site and the adjacent properties. The proposed onsite retention of 39.03 acres of forest satisfies the requirements of the forest conservation regulations.

The property contains 37 specimen trees, and removal of specimen trees now requires waiver approval. A waiver petition was submitted by the petitioner for removal of five specimen trees from the main development area and potential removal of an additional specimen tree due to sanitary sewer installation. The Subdivision Review Committee evaluated the waiver petition and concurred with the petitioner's justification. The Director of the Department of Planning and Zoning conditionally approved the waiver, subject to the petitioner continuing to investigate sewer alignment design alternatives to avoid or minimize impacts to specimen trees and their critical root zones. The State of Maryland Department of Natural Resources reviewed the waiver decision and determined that it met the intent of the State Forest Conservation Act.

Landscaping: This project will meet the minimum requirements of the Howard County Landscape Manual upon submission, review and approval of the final plan.

Planning Board Evaluation Criteria: The criteria by which the Planning Board is to evaluate the preliminary equivalent sketch plan are found in Howard County Zoning Regulations Subsection 107.E.6. They are enumerated and addressed below:

1. *"The proposed layout of lots and open space effectively protects environmental and historic resources."* (§107.E.6.a.)

Prior to laying out the development, all environmental resources were mapped and compiled on the base sheet for the project. These included floodplains, streams, wetlands, forests, and steep slopes. To avoid later conflicts, a field examination was conducted by the petitioner, its consultants, and personnel from the Corps of Engineers, Maryland Department of the Environment, Department of Planning and Zoning, and the Howard Soil Conservation District. The limits of the wetlands, streams, and their buffers as determined that day are depicted on the plans.

The layout of the lots, roads, and active recreational open space respects the environmental resources of the site. Aside from minor and unavoidable infrastructure/utility impacts, virtually all the floodplains, wetlands, streams, and steep slope areas have been preserved in open space lots. Much of the open space will be dedicated to the Department of Recreation and Parks, with the balance to be owned by the Homeowner's Association. Developments in the R-ED Zoning District require 50% total open space; Wincopia Farms provides over 53%.

The project's design minimizes the impact to existing forest, with all impacts due to the lots and roads being outside the forested environmental areas. For forested areas that will be cleared the project exceeds even the so-called "break-even point" by over five acres. There is no requirement to meet the break-even point since the forest conservation regulations allow for replanting. However, this project preserves more than enough forest so that it will not require any forest replanting to offset the areas cleared.

According to the HC Historic Sites map, there are no historic resources within the project boundaries.

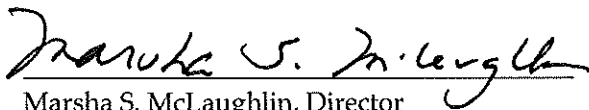
2. *"Buildings, parking areas, roads, storm water management facilities and other site features are located to take advantage of existing topography and to limit the extent of clearing and grading."* (§107.E.6.b.)

The areas to be cleared and graded for the features listed in the criterion are outside the environmental areas of the project and situated on the flatter portions of the site. This will minimize the clearing and grading required. Evidence of effective design in this regard includes the lack of structural retaining walls frequently needed in R-ED projects. At the detailed site development plan stage, some minor landscape-scaled walls may become necessary, but at this stage the design effectively utilizes existing topography and minimizes the extent of clearing and grading. The area within the proposed limit-of-disturbance is 75.0 acres or 59% of the gross area of the site.

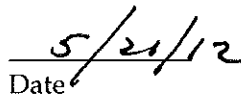
3. *"Setbacks, landscaped buffers, or other methods are proposed to buffer the development from existing neighborhoods or roads, especially from designated scenic roads or historic districts."* (§107.E.6.b.)

Over 90% of the project's perimeter is forested open space providing a strong visual buffer to surrounding properties. The depth of the contiguous on-site and off-site forested open space varies from 80' to many hundreds of feet. This treatment includes the neighboring Waskey Property (aka Westover Glen), Emerson Open Space Lot 36, the SHA Rest Stop, Village of King's Contrivance Open Space Lot 153, and the Gould Property. The Clemente Property will be buffered by a combination of forested open space and a Type "C" landscape buffer along proposed Street 'A'.

SRC Action: The Subdivision Review Committee (SRC) determined this plan may be approved, subject to minor comments of the Division of Land Development and Development Engineering Division being addressed on the plan originals. The Preliminary Equivalent Sketch Plan file is available for public review at the Public Service Counter of the Department of Planning and Zoning, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



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Department of Planning and Zoning


Date

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